meeting held on 16th July 2001. In the Annual Plan for the year 2001-02, a provision of Rs. 1,0 crore exists for the scheme. The balance amount will be provided in the 10th Five Year Plan. Regarding augmentation of cargo handling facilities, an amount of Rs. 40 crores has been projected in the 10th Five Year Plan proposals of the Port for procurement and installation of cargo handling equipment.

(d) The construction work of the Berth is expected to commence from July 2002.

Increase in gross registered tonnage of Indian Shipping

1623. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of SHIPPING be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have taken several steps to achieve an increase in the Gross Registered Tonnage (GRT) of Indian Shipping during the Ninth Plan period;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether priority is also being accorded to modernisation and diversification of Indian fleet; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) to (b) Yes Sir.

The Government has taken several steps to increase the Gross Registered Tonnage (GRT) of the Indian Shipping during the Ninth five year plan period. The steps taken are as under:—

(i) Shipping companies have been allowed to retain sale proceeds of their ships abroad and utilise them for fresh acquisition;

(ii) The Shipping companies are now permitted to get their ships repaired in any shipyard without seeking prior approval from the Government;

(iii) Indian Shipping Companies can now time charter-out ships;

(iv) No permission is required for raising foreign exchange loans from abroad by mortgaging the vessel with the lender;

(v) Section 33 AC of Income Tax Act has been restored in its original form, thereby facilitating ploughing back of profits by Shipping Companies for new acquisition.

(vi) The provisions of "EXIM POLICY" relating to import of vessels has been amended *w.e.f.* 1.4.2001 bringing all category of vessels/ships under OGL and thereby dispensing with licence requirement for import of various kinds ships. Ships could now be imported freely without licence.

(vii) The Depreciation rate on ships has been enhanced from 20% to 25% *w.e.f.* 1.4.2001, thereby facilitating faster tonnage replacement.

(viii) 100% Foregin Direct Investment in Shipping Sector is permitted.

Due to facilitative steps taken by the Government as mentioned above, the Shipping Companies have been able to acquire 115 Ships of various types, which include 33 new built vessels during the period 1.4.97 to 31.3.2001. Further, The Shipping Corporation of India has already placed orders for 8 new vessels and has proposals to acquire more vessels during this year.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. Priority is being accorded to modernisation and diversification of Indian fleet. It is a continuous process. SCI, a Public Sector Shipping Company, has a diversified fleet of 100 vessels/ships. It has also forayed into LNG transportation arena by entering into joint ventures for LNG vessels.

Expansion of Inland Waterways

1624. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of SHIPPING be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are contemplating to extend the length of the Inland Waterways to reduce the increasing pressure on the other means of transport;

(b) if so, whether techno-economic feasibility studies have been conducted on several waterways identified for undertaking such expansion;

(c) if so, the names of the waterways including the National Waterways which are being developed for shipping and navigation; and

(d) by when these Inland Waterways are likely to be functional?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING(SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Three waterways have been declared as national waterways.These are as under: National Waterway No. 1—Allahabad-Haldia stretch (1620 Km) of Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly river System.